

REMARKS

In the subject Office Action, the examiner rejected Claims 1-6 under 35 USC 103(a) as being obvious over McLaughlin '078 in view of Rudy '664. Applicants request reconsideration of their application in view of this amendment, which amends Claims 1, 2, 5 and 6, and provides argument supporting patentability of the pending claims.

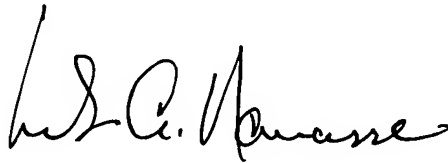
Applicants have amended Claims 1, 2 and 5 to require that the recited elastomeric material have a thickness of "approximately 1.50 mm (0.60 inch)", as opposed to the originally recited "range of 1 mm (0.04 inch) to 2.54 mm (0.100 inch)". The preferred thickness of 1.50 mm is disclosed in Applicants' specification at page 4, lines 1-2, and clearly distinguishes over any combination of the cited prior art. The recited thickness of 1.50 mm is twice as thick as the thickest material mentioned in the prior art of record (Rudy in particular), and the thickness is critically important to Applicants' invention because the thickness of the material allows it to function as an integral interface panel in addition to closing the bladder volume. No such functionality or structure is disclosed in the cited prior art. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 1, 2 and 5 patentably define over the prior art of record. The remaining claims (Claims 3, 4 and 6) depend from Claims 2 or 5 and also patentably define over the prior art of record at least by virtue of such dependency.

In regard to Claim 6, Applicants respectfully submit that no prior art of record discloses or suggests an annular sheet of elastomeric material welded to peripheral portions of top and bottom bladder sheets to form a closed volume. In McLaughlin, the elastomeric sheets 50, 55 are not annular by reasonable definition; they are planar sheets. Applicants have also amended Claim 6 to recite that the annular sheet of elastomeric material extends between peripheral portions of the first and second sheets of elastomeric material to form a closed volume, further defining over McLaughlin, where the elastomeric sheets 50, 55 clearly do not extend between the bladder sheets 40, 45.

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For the reasons given above, Applicants submit that Claims 1-6 as amended herein are patentable over the prior art of record. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection under 35 USC 103(a) and allowance of Claims 1-6 as amended herein.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark A. Navarre". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" and last name "Navarre" clearly distinguishable.

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